

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

כא' אייר תשפ"ג  
May 12, 2023

פרשת בהר-בחקתי  
11<sup>th</sup> year, edition 481

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### Days That Are a Daze

Hashem tests those who are able to handle it.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the Midrash says Hashem doesn't test the wicked rather only the tzadikim<sup>2</sup> because the wicked can't withstand the test. This can be compared to a strong animal and a weak one as surely a person would put his load on the strong animal. Another analogy is with banging a nail into a piece of wood. A person only bangs according to what the piece of wood can tolerate because otherwise it will break.

We must realize that the difficulties of life are intended to make us better,<sup>3</sup> not bitter.<sup>4</sup> Every day we must evince more of our greatness<sup>5</sup> and who we are.<sup>6</sup>

Every test in our life makes us  
Bitter or Better  
Every problem comes to  
Make us or Break us  
The choice is ours, Whether we  
become Victim or Victorious...

Many view pain as bad. A Rabbi debunked this and said that the Torah view is that pain is

<sup>1</sup> R' Tzadok Hakohen (Yisrael Kedoshim, p. 14, s.v. וכל ניסיון) writes that every test is something new, that no one was tested in this way ever before. Every person is a combination of many factors—his situation, nature, surroundings, etc. Since no one was ever tested with the very same circumstances as another, each person experiences a test differently.

<sup>2</sup> Breishis Rabba 34:2, 55:2. See the Ramban in Shaar Hagmul, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Every test we undergo is another step towards graduation in this school called "Life." Stay happy, because you are in the best school possible — and your teacher is none — other than Hashem himself!

<sup>4</sup> There are two ways of meeting difficulties: Alter the difficulties or alter yourself to meet them.

<sup>5</sup> A 7-year-old boy that received a flashlight as a birthday present from his parents discovered that when he turned it

to the "on" position it didn't project any light. Since he figured it was broken, he was surprised when his mother came that night to ask for it since there was a power outage. Although he told her it didn't work, he took another try at it and flicked the switch to turn it on. This time it filled the house with light. Since the boy was mystified, his mother explained to him that this light is powerful but in the presence of sunlight it is subsumed. This story contains a lesson for our lives — only in the dark when the light has faded can your light shine bright. When the world is on a spiritually low level, your flame brings enormous light to the world and is worth so much more. Similarly, when things are hard in a person's individual life, that is when his light can shine the most.

<sup>6</sup> It has been said, "In adversity, a man can become very well acquainted with himself because he is free from admirers."

not bad. Rather it is the price you pay for greatness.<sup>7</sup>

A man who saw a cocoon noticed the butterfly inside trying to make its way out of the tiny hole. The butterfly struggled and tinkered, to no avail. Feeling sorry for the butterfly, the man cut a large opening through which the butterfly could leave. The butterfly exited but the man noticed that his body was contorted and its wings were shriveled. This is how the butterfly lived its entire life — small, shriveled and unable to fly. It is the struggle to exit the cocoon that has the effect of transforming fluid from the butterfly's body to its wings which is how they develop. Although he thought he was doing a favor by ending the struggle, really he thwarted its growth. Struggles we go through can make us develop wings so that we can reach great heights.<sup>8</sup> There is a saying, "If you want a place in the sun you'll have to expect some blisters." We must realize that just over the hill is a beautiful valley, but we must climb the hill to see it.<sup>9</sup>

In a row of houses in Lakewood where all the homes had the same landscaping, each lawn had a large tree planted in the same location. During Hurricane Sandy, some of the trees fell while others didn't. This was because those watered with automatic sprinkler systems didn't remain intact since the systems collapsed. Those not automatically watered had to spread their roots deep into the ground to access the water and nutrients they needed. Thus they were firmly rooted in the ground and able to withstand the hurricane's winds. The other trees received their water easily and thus were not strong enough to survive the storm. The struggles we endure build us into strong, great people.<sup>10</sup> There is an expression, "There is no elevator to success. You have to take the stairs."



Whenever we find ourselves doubting how far we can go,<sup>11</sup> we need to remember how far we have come. Remember all we have faced,

<sup>7</sup> Someone once said that we must take the stumbling blocks in our lives and transform them into stepping stones.

<sup>8</sup> We should internalize that no one worth admiring succeeded without many failures along the way. The great poets wrote bad poems and the great artists drew unpleasant paintings.

<sup>9</sup> In the words of a similar saying: "No one has ever climbed a hill by just looking at it."

<sup>10</sup> A sign read, "When Hashem pushes you to the edge of difficulty, trust Him fully because two things can happen — either He'll catch you when you fall or He'll teach you how to fly."

<sup>11</sup> Incidentally, there is a saying, "Doubt kills more dreams than failure ever will," as people give up before they even get to the start line. Another saying is, "When you doubt your power, you give power to your doubt." (When you think

all the battles we have won and all the fears<sup>12</sup> we have overcome. We must do something today that our future self will be proud of.

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### Slippery Side

The abandonment of a straight line, veering off to the side, may constitute the beginning of deterioration. We see a hint to this in Targum Onkolos's translation of תהרו ובהרו, astonishingly empty<sup>13</sup> — צדיא, side.<sup>14</sup>



We know that Esav was a hunter as it says, איש ידע ציד, a man who knows trapping.<sup>15</sup> Animals are hunted through trickery and deception. A ציד, hunter is someone who operates deviously, from the side.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the word ציד is derived from צד, side.

In life, every deviation from the central proper point is a tendency towards the צד, towards תהרו.

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### Signing Signs

We are taught that Hashem told Moshe to take out the Jews. Moshe responds, "They won't believe me."<sup>17</sup> As a result, Hashem volleys back by showing him three miracles that he was to display to the people to win their confidence. The question raised is that if Moshe required the signs, then Hashem should have given it to him immediately. If he didn't need the signs then Hashem should just tell Moshe to continue with what He told him already.



Moshe and the Jews did not need signs. However, once he said that the Jews will not believe me, he then needed signs. If you don't trust that they will believe you, then they will not believe you. Hashem therefore tells him about the signs.<sup>18</sup>

This powerful lesson is showcased many times in life. If you are in sales and you do not believe you can sell the product, then the customer will not buy it. In a similar vein, if you do not believe in your children or your students, then you can't expect them to believe in themselves.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of five books including the recently released *Magnificent Marriage Insights*. His writings, some of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

that you don't know, know that somewhere inside you, you do. When you think you can't go on, know that you absolutely can and will.)

<sup>12</sup> A wise man once remarked, "Everything you desire is on the other side of your fear."

<sup>13</sup> Breishis 1:2.

<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, the word "side" in English sounds eerily similar to צד which means "side" in Lashon Hakodesh (See Yeshaya 66:12).

<sup>15</sup> Breishis 25:27.

<sup>16</sup> See Shemos 21:13 — ואשר לא צדיא, for one who had not lain in ambush.

<sup>17</sup> Shemos 4:1.

<sup>18</sup> R' Zev Leff.